

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 /026 W
-----301605Z 082439 /44

P R 291650Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3272
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 07047

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (NUMEROUS LINES OMITTED)

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, EG, SY, UK
SUBJECT: FCO BRIEFING ON FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S
VISIT TO EGYPT AND SYRIA

SUMMARY: BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN'S VISIT TO
CAIRO AND DAMASCUS THIS PAST WEEK EXPOSED HIM DIRECTLY
TO ARAB "CONFRONTATION" STATES. THE FCO TOLD US THAT
SADAT TOOK GENERALLY THE SAME LINE WITH OWEN ON AN
ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE THAT
HE HAD TAKEN IN WASHINGTON. THE EGYPTIANS ALSO EXPRESSED
GREAT CONCERN OVER SOVIET PENETRATION IN AFRICA, ES-
PECIALLY IN ETHIOPIA. IN SYRIA OWEN URGED THE ARABS TO
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ADOPT REASONABLE NEGOTIATING POSITIONS AND GOT AN AP-
ARENTLY RECEPTIVE REPLY FROM ASSAD. IN BOTH COUNTRIES
OWEN RAISED HIS INTEREST IN DEMILITARIZED ZONE ARRANGE-
MENTS. END SUMMARY

1. FCO ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY WEIR, WHO ACCOMPANIED
FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN ON HIS VISIT TO CAIRO AND DAMASCUS

THIS WEEK, BRIEFED US ON THE TRIP APRIL 29, PARTICULARLY
RE DISCUSSIONS ON ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES, AS FOLLOWS:

2. EGYPT. SADAT AND FAHMI STATED EGYPTIAN POSITIONS IN
SAME TERMS AS USG DESCRIBED TO BRITISH AFTER SADAT'S
VISIT TO WASHINGTON. RE A GENEVA CONFERENCE, FAHMI DIS-
MISSED THE PROPOSAL FOR A JOINT ARAB DELEGATION WITH
FUNCTIONAL WORKING GROUPS AS "NONSENSE". RE THE SUB-
STANTIVE ISSUE OF A JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN STATE LINK, HE
SAID THAT THIS ISSUE MUST BE SETTLED BEFORE ANY GENEVA
CONFERENCE OR ISRAEL WOULD EXPLOIT THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN
THE ARABS TO MAKE MINCEMEAT OF THEM. FAHMI WENT EVEN
FURTHER BY STATING THAT IF THIS ISSUE IS NOT SETTLED, IT
MIGHT BE BETTER TO HAVE THE NEGOTIATIONS OUTSIDE THE
GENEVA CONFERENCE FRAMEWORK. FAHMI TOLD THE BRITISH THAT
THE USG HAD SUGGESTED THAT THE HASHEMITE THRONE PROVIDE
AN "UMBRELLA" OVER BOTH EAST BANK AND WEST BANK. FAHMI
COMMENTED TO THE BRITISH THAT IF HE WERE HUSSEIN, HE WOULD
TAKE HIS TIME ON SUCH A CONSTITUTIONAL LINK WHILE HE CON-
SOLIDATED HIS POSITION ON THE WEST BANK. WHEN OWEN TRIED
TO GET INTO A DISCUSSION OF HIS CURRENT FOCUS ON DEMILI-
TARIZED ZONE MECHANICS, FAHMI REPLIED THAT THESE ARRANGE-
MENTS WOULD FALL INTO PLACE LATER.

3. OWEN THEN SAW SADAT. LATTER VOLUNTEERED HOW MUCH HE
HAD ADMIRERED PRESIDENT CARTER, AND SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT
OF PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS. WHEN OWEN ASKED ABOUT A
JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN STATE LINK, SADAT MADE LIGHT OF THE
PROBLEM. HE THOUGHT THAT BOTH ARAFAT AND KING HUSSEIN
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WOULD AGREE ON A FEDERAL LINK, EXCEPT THAT ARAFAT DOES
NOT WANT IT DECLARED UNTIL AFTER A PALESTINIAN STATE IS
SET UP. SADAT WANTS TO HAVE AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN
EVENTUAL FEDERAL LINK BEFORE GENEVA. BOTH SADAT AND FAHM
SAID THAT THE WHOLE ARGUMENT OVER PALESTINIAN REPRESENTA-
TION IS ESSENTIALLY AN ISRAELI MANEUVER TO STALL FOR
TIME AND PUT OFF DISCUSSIONS ON SUBSTANCE. HE SAID A
JOINT ARAB DELEGATION AT GENEVA WOULD BE THEORETICALLY
IDEAL, BUT IT WOULD GIVE TOO MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE
ISRAELIS AND THE RUSSIANS TO PLAY ON ARAB DIVISIONS.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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4. SADAT TOLD OWEN HE HOPED THERE WOULD BE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE USG AND THE PALESTINIANS TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION. SADAT SAID WHAT IS NEEDED IS A FACE-SAVING FORMULA, AND ONLY THE US IS IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE IT. WHEN OWEN PRESSED SADAT ON THE NEED TO GIVE THE ISRAELIS SOME REASSURANCE ON RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL, SADAT REPLIED THAT ISRAEL IS ALREADY WIDELY RECOGNIZED AND THE PLO IS NOT. SADAT SAID HE WANTS THE BRITISH AND FRENCH IN PARTICULAR TO ASSUME A ROLE IN GUARANTEEING ANY SETTLEMENT, AND PERHAPS INVOLVE ALL OF THE EC NINE IN SOME WAY. BOTH SADAT AND FAHMI MADE THE POINT THAT IT MIGHT BE USEFUL IF THE EC NINE GOT OUT AHEAD OF THE US IN TAKING PUBLIC POSITIONS ON SOME ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUES.

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5. ON AFRICA, OWEN EXPLAINED THE BRITISH POSITION AND GOT AN UNDERSTANDING REACTION. THE EGYPTIANS THEN "REALLY WENT TO TOWN", AS WEIR PUT IT. ON THEIR CURRENT PREOCCUPATION WITH THE SOVIET MASTER PLAN TO PENETRATE KEY AFRICAN COUNTRIES, WITH A MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF UNDER-

MINING EGYPT THROUGH THE SUDAN. SADAT CRITICIZED THE FAILURE OF THE WEST TO RESPOND, AND SAID THAT ONLY A VERY SHORT TIME REMAINS IN WHICH THE DIRG IN ETHIOPIA CAN BE GOTTEN RID OF. HE SAID SOMALIA SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE SOVIET UNION. FAHMI ADDED IF THERE IS AN ATTACK ON THE SUDAN, EGYPT WOULD NOT HESITATE TO GO IN. OWEN EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE EGYPTIAN PITCH. REGARDING LIBYA, SADAT MADE IT CLEAR HE HAD NOT CHANGED HIS POSITION ON QADHAFI, AND FAHMI SAID HE TOLD THE RUSSIANS THAT THEIR WARNING NOTE ON EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS CALLED INTO QUESTION SOVIET CO-CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE.

6. OWEN ALSO SAW GAMASSY AND TALKED TO HIM ABOUT DEMILITARIZED ZONE ARRANGEMENTS. GAMASSY AGREED THAT THEY WOULD CONSTITUTE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT. GAMASSY WAS UNCOMPROMISING ON CERTAIN DETAILS OF THEM. HE SAID THAT IN A FINAL SETTLEMENT NO ISRAELI PERSONNEL WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE OUTSIDE OF ISRAELI BORDERS, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT OBJECT TO THIRD-COUNTRY PERSONNEL BEING STATIONED IN DEMILITARIZED OR EARLY WARNING ZONES. GAMASSY FORESAW A GREAT BATTLE ON THE PRINCIPLE OF DEMILITARIZED ZONES INSIDE ISRAELI TERRITORY, AND SAID EGYPT WOULD NOT AGREE TO ALLOW THE ISRAELIS TO HANG ON TO SHARM EL-SHEIKH.

7. SYRIA. KHADDAM PREDICTABLY TOOK THE TOUGHEST LINE OF ANY ARABS OWEN TALKED TO, AND WEIR DISMISSED KHADDAM'S HARANGUE AS MORE RHETORIC THAN SUBSTANCE. HOWEVER, ASSAD TALKED VERY REASONABLY AND IMPRESSIVELY ON THE NEED FOR PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO WORK FOR
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IT. OWEN SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE ARABS TO BE PREPARED TO TAKE STEPS TO GIVE ISRAEL CONFIDENCE IN BOTH THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY FIELD, HAVING IN MIND GUARANTEE AND DEMILITARIZED ZONES. ASSAD REPLIED THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE ASKING FOR MORE THAN AN END TO THE STATE OF WAR; THEY ARE ASKING FOR A "STATE OF LOVE". ASSAD SAID THERE IS NO WAY THE ARAB DESIRE FOR PEACE COULD BE CONVERTED INTO SUCH AN EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP. WHEN OWEN PRESSED HIM ON THIS ISSUE, ASSAD SAID CONFIDENCE WOULD FLOW FROM UN SECURITY COUNCIL GUARANTEES, AN END OF BELLIGERENCY, AND TERRITORIAL MEASURES TO REDUCE FEARS OF AGGRESSION. HE REGARDED DEMILITARIZED ZONES AND THIRD COUNTRY OBSERVERS AS LESS IMPORTANT BUT COMPLEMENTARY, AND SAID HE WOULD ONLY ACCEPT PARITY IN ISRAELI AND SYRIAN DZ'S. HE ALSO ASSERTED THAT THE ISRAELI CLAIM THAT GOLAN IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THEM STRATEGICALLY IS FALSE.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 /026 W
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P R 291650Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (LINES OMITTED PARA 9)

8. REGARDING THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION QUESTION,
ASSAD TOOK THE SAME POSITION AS SADAT, SAYING THE
ISRAELIS HAD MADE AN ISSUE OF IT IN ORDER TO EVADE THE
REAL ISSUE AND PROVOKE DISSENSION AMONG THE ARABS. SYRIA
WOULD AGREE TO ANY ARRANGEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARABS.
ASSAD SAID HE IS IN FAVOR OF A CLOSER LINK BETWEEN
JORDAN AND THE PALESTINIANS, BUT SYRIA IS NOT TAKING
ANY INITIATIVE ON IT.

9. WEIR FELT THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT EXCHANGE CAME WHEN
OWEN SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TAKE MEASURES TO GIVE
ISRAEL CONFIDENCE, NOT ONLY FOR ITS OWN SAKE. BUT ALSO
BECAUSE TO KEEP WORLD PUBLIC OPINION FAVORABLE TO THE
ARABS THE LATTER MUST MAINTAIN REASONABLY DEFENDABLE
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NEGOTIATING POSITIONS. OWEN POINTED UP THE ENORMOUS TASK PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD HAVE IN GETTING ISRAEL TO MOVE. ASSAD AGREED, AND SAID HIS PRESENT UNDERSTANDING OF US ATTITUDES MAKE HIM OPTIMISTIC THAT THE US WOULD COME FORWARD WITH SENSIBLE PROPOSALS, IN WHICH CASE HE HOPED THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE OBLIGED TO GIVE UP DELAYING TACTICS AND ANSWER PRECISE QUESTIONS. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE TALKS, ASSAD COMMENTED THAT THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL AREA OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UK AND SYRIA.

10. DURING THE VISITS OWEN ALSO SAW THE PRIME MINISTERS OF THE TWO COUNTRIES AND DISCUSSED BILATERAL MATTERS WITH THEM, INCLUDING TRADE.

11. WEIR COMMENTED THAT THE VISIT HAD ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES BY MAKING UP FOR THE FACT THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO VISITS TO THESE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES BY SENIOR BRITISH MINISTERS FOR SOME TIME, AND BY GIVING OWEN FIRST-HAND IMPRESSIONS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM. WEIR FELT THE BRITISH ALSO DISPELLED DOUBTS ABOUT BRITAIN'S POSITION AMONG THE ARABS WHO SUSPECTED THAT THE BRITISH WERE "LAGGING BEHIND THE OTHER EC NINE." OWEN WAS ASKED WHEN THE EC NINE ARE GOING TO PRODUCE THE ABORTIVE DECLARATION OF LAST JANUARY 31 ON THE ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE; HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT PRESSED TOO HARD EITHER ON THIS ITEM OR ON RECOGNITION OF THE PLO.

12. WEIR SAID THAT COPIES OF THE MINUTES OF OWEN'S DISCUSSIONS WILL BE SENT TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. WEIR HIMSELF WAS SCHEDULED TO BRIEF REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL THE EC NINE EMBASSIES SHORTLY AFTER HE BRIEFED US.

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PFOR, EG, SY, UK, (OWEN, DAVID)
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